



CONNECTICUT

Description of the Formula

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Education Cost Sharing (ECS) Target Aid is still a foundation-type formula and is currently comprised of two components: **Base Aid and a Regional Bonus.** **Base Aid** - For each weighted student, towns receive a portion of the foundation (\$11,525) based on the ratio of the town's wealth when compared to the guaranteed wealth level—1.5 times the median town's wealth. Wealth is measured in terms of property per capita (90 percent of the weight) and median household income (10 percent). Students are weighted for poverty (free and reduced-price meals). **Regional Bonus** – Towns that are members of regional districts receive up to \$100 for each such student, depending on the number of regional grades.

However, for 2014-15, as in several prior years, the ECS formula was not strictly followed, and town-by-town appropriations were set by statute. Legislation directs that each town receive an ECS entitlement equal to the amount they were entitled to in the previous year. In 2014-15, the bulk of ECS increases (94 percent) went to the lowest-performing 30 school districts (Alliance Districts), which allocations were subject to state-approved school-improvement uses.

District-Based Components

Density/Sparsity of Small Schools

There are no adjustments for population density or sparsity.

Grade Level Differences

Does not apply.

Pupil Weights for District/School Size

Does not apply.

Declining Enrollment or Growth

The state's Minimum Budget Requirement (MBR) represents the minimum level that a town must appropriate to the school district. Generally, the MBR is predicated upon the prior year's

budgeted appropriation to the school district plus the increase in the ECS grant. Some allowance is made for town-district cost savings and for declining enrollment.

Capital Outlay and/or Debt Service

The state pays 10-70 percent of approved projects (or 20-80 percent if it can be shown that new construction is less expensive than renovation), inversely related to district wealth. For regional districts, the state pays an additional 10 percentage points on an equalized basis, but such districts may not receive more than 85 percent reimbursement. In addition, the state pays 80 percent for approved interdistrict magnet schools, agricultural science centers and regional special education facilities. Bonded indebtedness may not exceed 160 percent of the current year estimated tax receipts.

Transportation

The state pays 0-60 percent of eligible prior year expenditures, inversely related to district wealth. Regional high school districts receive an additional 5 percent, and regional K-12 districts receive an additional 10 percent. Districts are guaranteed a minimum grant of \$1,000. Grants are proportionally reduced to stay within the legislatively approved appropriation, inasmuch as the grant has been capped for several years.

Charter Schools

The state pays \$11,000 per pupil to charter school operators, in addition to providing some start-up/planning funding. Sending districts are responsible for all special education costs, transportation, and certain other costs for their students who choose to attend a charter.

Student-Based Components

Special Education

Since 1995-96, the state's primary contribution to general special education has been embedded within the Education Cost Sharing (ECS) formula described under **Description of Formula**, constituting approximately 19 percent of the foundation amount. Thus the ECS foundation reflects the state's contribution toward the cost of regular education and general education. The student count used in the ECS grant determination includes both regular education and special education students.

The state also supports extraordinary special education costs through its Excess Costs grant, which in principle is intended to fund 100 percent of student-based special education costs in excess of established thresholds. For children affected by state agencies, e.g., foster students and judicial placements, the state pays in excess of the district's prior year average cost per student (including regular and special education). For all other special education placements, the state pays 100 percent of the costs in excess of 4.5 times the prior year's average cost per student (including regular and special education). However, these grants are proportionately reduced to stay within the legislatively approved appropriation.

Low Income / Comp Ed / At-Risk

Does not apply.

Bilingual Education

Each district is entitled to receive a portion of the total amount appropriated according to the ratio of the number of eligible pupils in the district as compared to the total number of eligible pupils in the state. Among other criteria, program eligibility is limited to 30 months. Grant eligibility is limited to districts with schools containing 20 or more students with the same dominant language other than English.

Gifted and Talented Education

Does not apply.

Career and Technical Education

The state maintains and funds the Connecticut Technical High School System,

Preschool Education

Much focus has been paid to expanding universal access for low-income children to quality preschool programs. The Office of Early Childhood was established to further this agenda, and additional funding was appropriated.

Other

In addition to the 30 lowest-performing Alliance Districts previously mentioned, Connecticut targets additional funding to the 15 districts with the highest concentrations of poor and remedial students. Funding for these Priority Districts supports quality preschool education, summer school, and extended school building hours.

Among the state's 1161 public schools that serve some 545,600 students, the state supports a variety of interdistrict choice programs for the purposes of providing academic alternatives and reducing racial and economic isolation:

- Magnet Schools - 77 interdistrict magnets
- Charter Schools – 18 charters
- Connecticut Technical High School System – 17 state-operated technical high schools
- OPEN Choice – city students enrolled in suburban districts; and
- Agricultural Science – 17 regional high schools

Revenue and Expenditure Information

State Mandates Restricting Revenue or Expenditure Increases

Connecticut operates under a constitutional spending cap which requires a balanced budget. The cap limits appropriations based upon two major economic variables: either the five-year average growth in Connecticut personal income or annual growth of the Consumer Price Index, whichever is greater. The cap can only be exceeded if the Governor declares an emergency or the existence of extraordinary circumstances and three-fifths of both chambers of the General Assembly concur.

Property Assessment Ratios Used/Legal Standards For Property Assessment

Assessment ratios used may not exceed 100 percent of true and actual or fair market value.

Measure of Local Ability To Support Schools

For transportation, adult education, and school construction grants: Relative wealth of the town, based on equalized property value per capita.

For the Education Cost Sharing (ECS) grant: Equalized property value per weighted pupil and per capita, modified by a ratio of the town's 2011 per capita income to the town with the highest per capita income and 2011 median household income to the town with the highest median household income. Pupils are weighted for poverty.

School District Budget and Tax Rate Procedures/Sources of Local Revenue

The state's 166 districts are fiscally dependent. Local boards of finance propose entire town budgets, which include the school budget. Voters accept or reject the total budget. Voter approval is required for a new tax increase.

State Support for Nonpublic Schools

Aid to public schools is provided for mandated services to nonpublic schools and/or pupils for health services (doctors, nurses and dental hygienists), transportation, and child nutrition.

Source: Dianne deVries, Connecticut Coalitions for Justice in Education Funding